**Choices**

Mellissa and Jacob were sitting on a park bench. The wind was just a breeze; people were walking by, babies in strollers, dogs on and off leashes. Everything was normal. Then Jacob brought up the fact that he always wanted to be a Christian. He wanted to believe what they believed, it sounded interesting to him. Mellissa looked offended considering they became friends at a Jewish synagogue. “Why would you wanna do that? What’s wrong with being Jewish?” Mellissa asked. Jacob just looked at her, then he finally said, “There’s nothing wrong with being Jewish, I just feel like it’s not really the right fit for me.”

“Well good luck telling your parents that”, Mellissa said with a bit of a humored voice, “you’re almost thirteen. How would your parents feel if you told them that you wanted to cancel your bar mitzvah because you’re becoming a Christian?” It seemed as though Jacob forgot about that, “I’ll find a way”, he said. The two friends then walked back home to Mellissa’s house to continue their usual Wednesday routine.

Every Wednesday, Jacob and Mellissa went to the park to hang out, and then they would go to Mellissa’s house to do homework. And as usual, when they arrived at Mellissa’s house, her mother was cooking her “Wednesday night Jewish special” for dinner. “Hi kids!” she said. “How was the park?” Mellissa quickly responded, ”It was good Mom, we’re gonna go upstairs and do homework.” Her mom just smiled. When they went upstairs Mellissa just had this grin on her face.

“What?” Jacob asked her. “Oh I’m just thinking. What if when you tell your parents you want to be Christian, they don’t let you eat my mom’s Jewish meals?” At first, Jacob was nervous about that, but then he knew that just because he wanted to be a part of a different religion, didn’t mean that his parents were going to restrict him from everything Jewish.

When Jacob went home, he was thinking of how he would tell his parents. He just kept thinking about what Mellissa was saying. He just kept thinking about if his parents would exclude him from the Jewish meals and the parties. He thought for a bit, but he was sure he wanted to be Christian.

He went on the computer and opened his Facebook page. He wanted to announce the big news. Then he ran down stairs where his mom was almost finished preparing dinner. “Mom can I tell you something?” Jacob asked.

“Sure sweetie, what’s up?” she said in her usual kind voice. Jacob hesitated because he was nervous, but he had to do this. “I wanna become Christian.” His mom stopped for a second, then said, “I think that’s very explorative of you, I’m glad you’re taking new interests. But good luck telling your father that. But let’s not think about that right now, it’s time for dinner.” “Where is Dad?” Jacob sounded relieved that his dad possibly wasn’t home. As his mom was placing the food on the table, she shrugged, “he got stuck at work, and he insisted we start eating without him.” Jacob gave a heavy sigh as if he was upset about that, but really, he was jumping for joy inside.

Only about fifteen minutes later, Jacob’s dad walked in. Without saying a word, he dropped his stuff on the floor, grabbed his plate and placed some food on it. He was in a rush from work, you could tell because with a full mouth he mumbled, “I checked your Facebook page before I left work.” Jacob’s eyes grew wide. He was nervous. He knew his dad wouldn’t be very approving of his knew interest. “Uhhh…” Jacob didn’t know what to say, in reality, he didn’t want to say anything. But his dad was just glaring at him, making the temperature in the house seem warmer than it already was. “It sounded interesting to me.” He finally said.

Jacob didn’t know what else to say, he ran upstairs and closed the door behind him when he reached his room. His phone rang just as he sat on his bed. It startled him, but when he saw it was Mellissa, he felt better. He answered the phone, “Hello?”

“Jacob!” Mellissa screeched. You would never believe the news I just got from my parents.” She sounded so excited, Jacob couldn’t resist letting a smile stretch across his face. “What’s the news?” Mellissa hesitated building suspense, “My mom told me that she and my dad are going to spend *five-thousand* dollars on my bat mitzvah!” Jacob was so excited for her, but he also felt the jealousy stirring in his stomach. He wanted to have five thousand dollars spent on his bar mitzvah too.

“That’s great” he finally choked out. “I know right! I just can’t stop thinking about it.” She was so high pitched that you could just tell that there was a smile on her face. But the more excited she sounded, and the more she even talked about it, the sadder Jacob got. With a toned down voice and a frown on his face, he said, “Uh, I got to go.”

“Are you ok? Jacob, you sound sad. Is there any way I can he-” Jacob just hung up the phone. He wasn’t really interested in what else Mellissa had to say.

Mellissa just sat on the floor, resting up against her bed. She was regretting she had called Jacob. She knew he was upset that he wouldn’t get to have or spend time planning or having fun at a bar mitzvah of his own. Mellissa thought she should go over to his house. “No I better not. I’ll just give him some space.” She quietly said to herself tinkering with her touch screen cell phone.

In the mean time, Jacob let his jealousy get the best of him. He knew where his dad kept the big knives. He grabbed one and snuck out of the house. He walked over to Mellissa’s house and threw pebbles at her window. She opened it, saw it was Jacob, and with a smile on her face she climbed down the tree near her window. “Oh my gosh Jacob, you don’t know *how* happy I am to see you” she said jogging up to him.

Jacob’s hands were behind his back. He looked so casual. But as Mellissa got closer, he drew his hand out from behind his back, holding the knife. He lifted his arm and had a disgusted look on his face. Mellissa’s eyes widened, she screamed and held her hand out soon before running away. But just before she did that, Jacob dropped the knife. It fell to the ground and stuck straight up, handle facing the sky, blade in the grass. Mellissa had tears rolling down her face. Jacob just stood there. Frozen. Mellissa turned and ran, she climbed up the tree, into her room, and slammed the window shut. She closed the curtains and curled up on the floor, still crying. She was so afraid; she didn’t know what to do. “How could Jacob do that to me? I knew I should’ve told him the news. This is all my fault. I’m just gonna give him some space. That’ll be good for both him *and* me.”

She got up and walked out to her living room. She turned on the TV and decided to relax. Her dad walked in and sat on the couch next to her. “How was school today?” Mellissa glared at him, she was thinking of what to say without making her sound nervous. “Good” she said. Her dad settled in the couch letting his back sink into the cushion behind him. He didn’t say anything after that. Mellissa just assumed he was tired. They both watched television together until Mellissa got tired and decided to go to sleep.

By that time, Jacob was in bed. He wasn’t asleep though. He was lying there in his bed staring at the ceiling, probably only blinking once every five minutes. He was in shock at what he almost did. His eyes were red from his tears. He was lying so straight his tears were creating a pool in his eyes. It wasn’t until about 11pm that he finally fell asleep.

It was Saturday; Mellissa still wasn’t talking to Jacob. She was too afraid that he might try to do that again. She was barely brave enough to leave her own room.

Jacob walked downstairs to find his mom with a worried look on her face as she was talking on the phone. “Uhuh… yes I understand… ok I’ll talk to him… I hope she gets better… Thanks” She clicks the ‘end’ button on the phone, places it lightly on the table and stares at Jacob with blank, yet devilish eyes.

“What?” he asks wondering who was on the phone, assuming it was Mellissa’s mom or dad.

“That was Mellissa’s mom. She said that Mellissa has been acting really different lately and doesn’t know why. She said she’s heard Mellissa crying, and doesn’t want to leave her room, and seems *scared* actually. She was wondering if you knew anything about it.” She said curiously and starting to impatiently tap her nails on the fine French wood dining table.

Jacob cringed as if embracing for impact. He turned slowly preparing to run back upstairs. His mom suddenly stood up and started walking toward him, knowing he did something wrong. “What did you do?” her devil eyes not so blank anymore. Jacob just stood there, he opened his mouth but nothing came out. He finally yanked the words from the back of his throat, “I plead the fifth!” Jacob thought it would be better if what he didn’t wasn’t shared. He was hoping he had the right to remain silent in this situation.

His mom looked at him like he just did something immensely stupid. “We’re not in a court room Jacob. Tell me what’s going on.”

Jacob didn’t know what to say. He was embarrassed, all he could think about was the image in his head; Mellissa running away from him as the knife dropped to the ground. Mellissa having tears running down her cheeks. He could imagine her sitting in her room depressed and scared. He felt so bad. “I’ll be right back. I have something that might help explain. Wait here.” He ran upstairs in a rush. Hastily entered his room and lifted the mattress, retrieving the leather- protected knife that he was hiding from that night. He walked back downstairs with his hand behind his back. When he reached the bottom of stairs where his mother was standing, arms crossed, he brought his arm to the front showing his mom the knife still enclosed in its case.

Her eyes grew wide, in fear and anger. “What is this?!” she screamed, grabbing the knife and holding it firmly in her hand. “I cannot believe you! What were you thinking?! Are- are you trying to tell me that you tried to *kill* Mellissa?! How could you do this?! Oh you are *so* grounded mister. I’m calling your father. You better get up to room right know, because you will *no longer* be let out of the house for the next three months unless it’s for school. Either your father or I will drive you to school and we will pick you up from school. I can’t believe you!”

He turned, crying know. He timidly walked up to his room, feeling like he was about to faint. He knew he did the right thing by telling the truth, even though it came with major consequences.

Mellissa was still feeling scared, but she was hungry, and she ran out of the food she had stashed in her miniature fridge she had placed in the corner of her room. She opened the door, took one step and cringed when the floor creaked under her. She slowly continued walking down the hall and into the living room. Her mom was there in the kitchen making lunch. She turned around and her face lit up when she saw Mellissa. “Sweetie are you ok?! You look starved. I’m making your favorite pasta; why don’t you go rest on the couch and watch a little television.”

“Mom?” Mellissa said quietly, “I was actually hoping I could tell you what happened, I think it might make me feel better if I tell you.”

“Oh sure, I don’t mind at all, go ahead, tell me what happened.”

“Well, I’m not really sure how to say this without you freaking out. Ummm… Jacob sort of stole a knife from his house, came over here, got me to climb out of my window and down the tree to say hi. Then he pulled the knife out from behind his back and held it up,” Mellissa could see her mom’s eyes widen, but she continued. “I held my hand out and ran, as I was running, I think his conscious took over, because he dropped the knife and it landed it the grass. I climbed up the tree and into my window. I closed the window, closed the curtain, and started crying hard. And I’ve been afraid to leave my room since then.” “…” “That’s it, that’s why.”

Her mom just stared, then quickly picked up the phone and dialed a number so fast; Mellissa could barely tell what it was. She figured it was her detective friend, Mellissa’s dad, or Jacob’s mom.

“Yes hi, its Andrea. Mellissa just told me what happened; I hope your son told you. I’m suing your family for the pain Jacob caused my daughter! The knife also cut through a wire that was connected to the sprinklers. That takes *a lot* of money to fix! I will let you know when the case is.” she said and without hesitation she hung up the phone and slammed in down on the table.

Jacob’s mom just stood there, speechless. She walked over to the stairs looked up at the door to Jacob’s room, and then walked up. She opened the door to his room only to find him curled up in the corner of his room, crying. She just looked at him. “Well,” she started, “I just got off the phone with Mellissa’s mom. I guess Mellissa told her what happened, because she’s suing us.” Her voice was stern. Jacob knew better than to say something. Especially since the thing he would say would come out sarcastically. Jacob’s mom just turned and walked out.

After she closed the door behind her, he rushed to get his cell phone (the one thing she forgot to take away, although he wasn’t about to tell her). He dialed Mellissa’s number but made the call private because he knew she wouldn’t answer if she saw it was him.

“Hello?” Mellissa answered.

“Mellissa its Jacob, *please* don’t hang up. I have something important to say.”

“Ok what” she said in an irritated voice.

“I don’t like to see our families fight. Or us fight. I mean, what if I never get to see you again because if this? I can’t lose one of my best friends. I know that what I did is wrong. I’m sorry. Even if I said sorry a million times, it wouldn’t even compare to how sorry I really am. I was jealous; I don’t know why I did that. I wasn’t myself.” He could go on and on. And Mellissa knew that, so she interrupted.

“Obviously you weren’t yourself.” She said. “I understand what you’re trying to say. I forgive you. But how are we supposed to get this fixed up between our families?”

“I’m not sure, but I think I have an idea. Since I’ve been grounded for three months and won’t have a bar mitzvah anyway, maybe I can convince my parents to use some of their saved up money to fix the sprinklers.””Jacob said, is voice sounding optimistic.

Mellissa hesitated. “Wait. Are you saying you *want* a bar mitzvah? You don’t want to become Christian anymore? That sounds like a great idea. So why don’t you talk to your mom, and then have her call my mom and see if we can work this out. And I’ll talk to my mom to soften her up a bit.”

“Sounds great. Bye Mellissa.”

“Bye.”

Jacob hung up the phone and with a confident breath of air he went downstairs. He found his mom sitting on the couch, reading the newspaper. She didn’t seem mad, but Jacob was still nervous.

“Mom, I really need to talk to you.” He said, voice cracking mid- sentence.

His mom pulled the newspaper away. “What’s on your mind?”

“Well”, Jacob started, “I don’t like seeing you and Dad get sued. I don’t like seeing you fight with Mellissa’s parents. Do you think there is a way we can make it up to them? Like since I’m grounded for three months, missing my birthday, then maybe you could use some of the bar mitzvah money to pay for the broken sprinkler system. I don’t want to be Christian anymore. I guess was just a stage, and considering what sort of problems it has caused lately, I don’t think it’s a good idea. Please do something. Call Mellissa’s mom and get things worked out. I think it will make our lives easier.”

Jacob’s mom looked away for a second, thinking about what her son had just told her, wondering what she should do. “You know what? I think that’s a great idea, let me call right know and work this all out.” She stood from the couch with a smile on her face. She knew Jacob was becoming a smart person who was learning to look out for others.

The phone rang and a grin spread across Mellissa’s face. Her mom picked up the phone.

Mellissa couldn’t hear the conversation, but everything got worked out. Mellissa’s mom got off the phone with a smile on her face. She told Mellissa that she wasn’t going to sue because Jacob’s parents were going to pay to fix the sprinkler system.

Jacob was happy, he got his friend back.